

## 2013 Letters About Literature Level 1 Honorable Mention

Ann Yokote's letter to Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea*

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January 2, 2013

Dear Greg Mortenson:

I am a student at Hendersonville Middle School. I first read your book with my family when I was in the third grade. I had then just started getting grades, and I thought that school = stress. I was not always excited to go to my stress source every day. I worked hard, mostly because people expected me to be smart – and get perfect grades. So when I read your book, I was amazed at how the souls in the small village were determined to learn just to learn. I realized that we people in America learn, and learn, and learn but don't really appreciate it. But children in the village you went to rarely got educated, yet their determination to learn was unstoppable. They wanted to learn. They wanted to go to school. But for me, I didn't care that much about school – it was just another thing in my life. You changed that feeling in me once I read your book, Three Cups of Tea.

The kids scratched in the dirt, waiting for their teacher to come the next week. We kids in America use pencils on paper, sit in desks, use technology, and learn inside a safe building. How lucky we are. How lucky I am. But we do not have that deep determination inside of us like the children in that small village. We just see education as another thing in our world. Many times, in my classes children ask, "When would we use this in life?" or "How is this useful in life?" I used to be one of those questioners. After I read your book I understood that we should just be thankful for what we have, and to be determined to learn for the sake of the children in the world who don't get proper education.

When I can't do something, I get frustrated with myself. I wonder why can't I do this? Or, what is wrong with me? Or I think, this is impossible! But then I remembered how you and the children of that small village had determination. You were determined to help, determined to honor. The children were determined to learn, to follow their dreams. My determination grew when I thought of that. I dedicate my determination to you. The village. To the building

of the schools. To the love and kindness you have shown. To your honoring of your sister. To the people who live without education. To the children that don't get a chance for education.

Before I read Three Cups of Tea, I was a person lucky enough to go to school, but who would rather not pursue an education. I didn't have the determination to learn. After I read your book, my point of view changed on education, people and the world. And I thank you for that. I hope you go on honoring people, helping people, and loving people. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ann Yokote